

Week Ending Friday, May 10, 1996

The President's Radio Address

May 4, 1996

Good morning. This week was another good week for America. We learned that growth is up and unemployment is down. That's good for American jobs and good for America's families. We also had more good news on America's families today involving the Family and Medical Leave Act, which I was proud to sign in 1993. This week the bipartisan panel Congress created to study it reported that the law has helped more than one in six American employees take time off because of a serious family health problem, without any danger of losing their jobs. And almost 90 percent of the businesses found that complying with family and medical leave cost them little or nothing. This is making America's families stronger, promoting work and family.

That's what we have to do with welfare reform, too. Our job is to fix a welfare system that too often pulls families apart and turns it into one that helps families pull together, to fix a system that traps too many people in a cycle of dependency that ends up snaring their children as well, and instead, to create one that promotes jobs and independence.

For the last 3 years, we have been working hard to turn the welfare system around. All across America, the welfare rolls are down, food stamp rolls are down, teen pregnancy rates are down compared to 4 years ago. And compared to 4 years ago, more and more people on welfare today are working as a condition of receiving welfare.

A lot of this has happened because our administration has worked very hard to free States from Federal rules and regulations which have built up over the years and which contribute to the flaws in the present system. We have slashed this redtape to 37 States, covering 75 percent of all the people on welfare in America, so that they can take steps to fix the broken system. State by State, we

are building a welfare system that demands work, requires responsibility, and protects our children.

But more needs to be done. The American people need a welfare system that honors American values: work, family, and personal responsibility. In 1994, and again this year, I sent Congress a sweeping welfare reform plan that would impose strict time limits on how long people can stay on welfare and strict work requirements for people when they are on welfare. My plan would also provide more funding for child care, so single parents can go to work. And it would crack down on parents who skip out on their responsibility to pay child support.

If Congress sends me a welfare reform bill that is tough on work instead of tough on children and weak on work, I will gladly and proudly sign it. Meanwhile, I am going to keep moving ahead to fix the welfare system by promoting work and looking out for our children.

Today, I'm acting to help teen mothers break free from the cycle of dependency for good. The only way for teen mothers to escape the welfare trap is to live at home, stay in school, and get the education they need to get a good job. We must make sure the welfare system demands that teen mothers follow the responsible path to independence.

Ohio has used freedom from Federal rules to implement a terrific program they call LEAP—Learning, Education, and Parenting. LEAP cuts welfare checks when teen mothers don't go to school, and rewards them when they do. And it works. A report released just this week by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation shows that for an important group of teens LEAP significantly increased the number of teen mothers who finished school, got jobs, and got off welfare. Every State should follow this example.

That's why today I'm announcing that every State must put in place a plan to keep

teen mothers on welfare in school. We are going to audit the progress of every State and make the results public. Second, we are going to make teen mothers who drop out of school go back to school and sign contracts that spell out exactly how they are going to take responsibility for their own lives. And third, we are giving States immediate authority to provide bonuses to teen mothers who go to school and graduate, and to cut back the checks of those who don't.

Finally, I'm challenging every State in the country to use its power to keep children who have children at home where they belong. There should be no incentive to leave home for a bigger welfare check. Unfortunately, even though they can, most States don't require teen mothers to live at home. That's wrong. Of course, if there is an abusive situation at home, children should be living in another safe, responsible setting. But we have to make it clear that a baby doesn't give you a right, and won't give you the money, to leave home and drop out of school. Today we are moving to make responsibility a way of life, not an option.

These commonsense steps have bipartisan support. They will help teen parents escape the cycle of dependency and start down the path to a successful future for themselves and their children. Now Congress needs to do its job and pass welfare reform. I'm glad that a group of bipartisan lawmakers is working on welfare reform. If Congress sends me a clean welfare reform plan that demands work, demands responsibility, protects children, and helps families stay together, I will sign it. Until then, I'll keep working to do everything in my power to reform welfare, step by step and State by State.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Map Room at the White House.

Message on the Observance of Cinco de Mayo, 1996

May 4, 1996

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Cinco de Mayo.

Each year the Fifth of May reminds us of the blessings of our nation's rich cultural

diversity. The Mexican people have made profound and lasting contributions to our society, enriching our national life with the values of family, faith, and love of country.

In commemorating the victory of Mexico's army at the Battle of Puebla, we rededicate ourselves to strengthening the bonds of friendship and partnership between the peoples of Mexico and the United States. Our nations share a legacy of independence and courage in the face of adversity, and each time we celebrate Cinco de Mayo, we reaffirm our reverence for these ideals.

Hillary and I send best wishes to all for a wonderful holiday.

Bill Clinton

Remarks at the White House Correspondents Association Dinner

May 4, 1996

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Carl, Terry, Mr. Vice President and Mrs. Gore, Mr. Speaker, Governor, to distinguished head table guests, to all the honorees tonight, my colleagues in the administration, to all the entertainers that made all the politicians feel that they came out to get a thrill instead of listen to me.

I apologize for being late tonight, but, as you know, I was at a charity event at Chelsea's school, auctioning off a game of golf. It brought in a few dollars.

Audience member. How much? Tell us how much.

Audience member. Could I ask a follow-up? [Laughter]

The President. Well, I can tell you this, I know I was criticized for putting it up, but it was not bought by the ambassador from Iran. [Laughter] I was hoping Ralph Reed would buy it, but he didn't even bid. [Laughter]

Anyway, it got a little money, but the thing that disappointed me was that it didn't generate as much as I had hoped. So I was able to generate some serious cash for the Sidwell Friends School; I auctioned off the shoes I wore the day I shook hands with President Kennedy. [Laughter]

By the way, if there's anybody here who would be willing to pay \$500,000 for a Presi-